

An Improvement on Psychoanalysis

The Psychology of the Unconscious
(For Dinner-Table Consumption)

*Originally published in the December
1916 edition of Vanity Fair.*

Psychoanalysis, the investigation of the nature of the mind, is an old diversion. But science—if it really be science—has found a new method for such analytical parlour games. By it the reactions of a man to various impressions, through the nerves, are measured. The quickening of his pulse, when the professor suddenly shouts the word "Muriel" at him; the depressed expression when he whispers the words "income tax"; all these can now be weighed in the scales of science.

After a labourious research of months the whole nature of the soul is laid bare, and the reasons of a preference for Cherrystones over Little Neck clams, unmasked. Even the character of a man's dreams is supposed by this school to reveal his hidden nature.

Professor Freud of Vienna is the best known of those who have been developing this line of study, but recently Professor Jung of Zurich, has challenged his teaching and his supremacy alike with a book called *Psychology of the Unconscious*.

There is, in short, a split in the psychoanalysis camp. This essay will give in outline the main doctrine of psychoanalysis, and explain the nature of the quarrel between Freud and Jung. The subject is quite a fascinating one, and will probably be discussed at every dinner-table during the coming social season.

Our grandmothers, before we had finished teaching them to extract nutriment from ova (by suction), were wont to spend the hours of nightlights with divines—or rather, with their Works. They would interpret their own

dreams by the aid of a variety of theological works. *Mais nous avons change tout cela*. Today our grandmothers dance the hula-hula at Montmartre, or at the Castles in the Air, until the dawn breaks, and they now interpret their dreams by the aid of Professor Freud or Professor Jung, for Joseph and his ilk have been tried and found wanting.

Psychoanalysis has been but ill understood by the average man. Most of us, however, will acquiesce in the necessity for an inquiry into the cause of dreams—and of the poet's dreams, dreams which are in reality the myths of a race. For all effects have psychic or hidden causes.

The Victorian age was distinguished by its mechanical interpretation of all phenomena. Not only did it destroy our ideas of the divine nature of the soul, but it would not even permit us to be human. A live man only differed from a dead one as a machine in motion does from one at rest. The only exception to this analogy was that we did not know how to restart a man that happened to have stopped.

Dreams, therefore, were regarded as undigested thoughts. I made a small research of my own in this matter, recording the dreams of a month. All but two of some fifty of my dreams were clearly connected, either with the events of the previous day, or with the conditions of the moment. Rainfall on my face would start a dream of some adventure by water, for example. Or a battle royal with a man at chess would fight itself all over again, with fantastic additions, in the overtired and overexcited brain.

I am bound to say that the theory that dreams come from natural causes in our everyday life seems to me perfectly an adequate and satisfactory one. I conceive of the brain as an *édition de luxe* of the wax cylinder of a dictograph. I imagine that disturbances of our blood currents (intoxications, and the like) reawaken some of these impressions at random, with the same result,

more or less, as if you started a victrola, and kept on jerking it irregularly. Our thoughts are normally criticized and controlled by reason and reflection and will; when these are in abeyance they run riot, combine in monstrous conspiracies, weave wizard dances. Delirium is but exaggerated nightmare.

But since the Victorians, the universe is conceived more as dynamic than kinematic, more as force than as motion; and the will has at last become all-important to philosophy.

We ought not to be surprised to learn that Dr. Jung of Zurich balked at some of Freud's conclusions. Instead of relating will to sex, he related sex to will. Thus, all unconsciously, he has paved the way for a revival of the old magical idea of the will as the dynamic aspect of the self. Each individual, according to the initiates, has his own definite purpose, and assumes human form, with its privileges and penalties, in order to execute that purpose. This truth is expressed in magical language by the phrase "Every man and every woman is a star" [in] *Liber Legis*, which stands at the head of all hieratic writings. It follows that "The word of Sin is Restriction"; "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law." So, once more, we see Science gracefully bowing her maiden brows before her old father, Magic.

Dr. Jung has, however, not reached this high point in conscious thought. But he sees clearly enough that neuroses and insanities spring from repressions, from internal conflicts between desire and inhibition; and he does apparently accept fully the definition of "libido" as Will, in the magical sense. Bergson's "*élan vital*" is very much the same, if a shallower conception. At any rate, let us rejoice that the tedious and stupid attempt to relate every human idea to sex has been relegated to oblivion; or, if you prefer to put it that way, that we must now interpret sex in vaster symbols, comprehending and achieving the ancient and modern worships of Pan as embracing the universe more adequately than

almost any other conception. The charge of anthropomorphism still lies; but this is necessary. "God is man"—the third and secret motto of the Knights of the Temple—is, after all, for humanity at least, a proposition of identity, and relative only in so far as all Truth is relative.

The main practical issue of Jung's acquiescence in magical theory is, as explained above, his interpretation of myths. The myth is the dream of the race. He sees that Freud cannot sustain his thesis that every dream is a picture of unfulfilled desire; but he seeks to prove that the great myths of the race, being really the poems of the race, are the artistic and religious expression of the will of the race. For the will of the world becomes articulate in the true poet, and he is the incarnation of the spirit of the times (the *Zeitgeist*). He was of old limited by the frontiers of his own civilization and time, but today his footstool is the planet, and he thinks in terms of eternity and of infinite space.

Now Jung's great work has been to analyze the race-myths, and to find in them the expression of the unconscious longings of humanity.

We cannot think that he has been particularly happy in selecting wooden, academic exercises like *Hiawatha*, which has as much inspiration as the Greek iambics of a fourth-form boy in a fourth-rate school; and he is still obsessed by the method and also by the main ideas of Freud. Much of his analysis is startling, and at first sight ridiculous.

Can we close our eyes to the perpetual contradictions in his alleged symbolism? Jung regards a serpent on a monument as desire, or the obstacle to desire, or the presence of desire, or the absence of desire, just as suits his purpose. There is no consistency in the argument, and there is no serious attempt to bring all cognate symbols into parallel. He brings many, it is true—but he omits certain important ones, so that one is bound to suspect that all his omissions are intentional!

However, the main point of this paper is to illustrate the prime line of reasoning adopted by Jung. This understood, the reader can ferret out his own explanations for his own dreams, desires and myths!

Jung is a determinist. The Victorians—especially Herbert Spencer—denying “free will,” would argue that a man ate an egg not because he wanted to do so, but because of the history of the universe. The forces of infinity and eternity bent themselves in one herculean effort, and pushed the a v into his mouth! This is quite undeniable; but it is only one way of looking at the egg question.

Now Jung treats literature in just this way. He will not admit that an author has any choice of material. If Rupert of Hentzau wounds somebody in the shoulder, it is because of the story of Pelops and Hera, in which the shoulder is a sexual symbol. If the other man ripostes and touches Rupert in the ear, it is because Pantagruel was born from the ear of Gargamelle. So the ear is a sexual symbol. If the hero of a novel goes from Liverpool to New York, it is the myth of “the night journey by sea of the sun.” If he goes on to Brooklyn, it is the Descent into Hades of Virgil, or Dante, or anybody else! There is no evasion of this type of argument; but all arguments that prove everything prove nothing! If I prove that some cats are green, it is interesting; but if I go on to show that all cats are green, I destroy myself. “Greenness” becomes included implicitly in the idea of “cat.” It is senseless to say that “all bipeds have two legs.”

However, Dr. Jung does not mind this at all. He definitely wishes to reduce the universe of will, which we think so complex and amusing, to a single crude symbol. According to him, the history of humanity is the soul of the child to free itself from the mother. Every early need is met by the mother; hunger and fatigue find solace at her breast. Even the final “will to die,” the

desire of the supreme and eternal repose, is interpreted as the return to earth, the mother of us all.

It will occur to the reader that there is much in this; for instance, the myth or religion of the race tends to disappear with its emancipation from the mother and family system.

But we cannot conquer one's revolt against what seems the essential absurdity of the whole Jung argument; that, considering—let us say, the importance of the horse to man, with so many horses to choose from, Jung can see nothing in a story of a man on horseback but a reference to the "symbol of the stamping horse," which has something to do with the dreams of one of his neurotic patients on the one hand, and the mythical horse in the *Rg-Veda* on the other!

We almost prefer the refinement of modesty evidenced by the young lady who always blushed when she saw the number "six"—because she knew Latin! However, we should all study Jung. His final conclusions are in the main correct, even if his rough working is a bit sketchy; and we've got to study him, whether we like it or not, for he will soon be recognized as the undoubted Autocrat of the 1917 dinner-table.

Just ask your pretty neighbour at dinner tonight whether she has introverted her Electra-complex; because it will surely become one of the favourite conversational gambits of the coming social season!